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Abstract

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Editorial Note

Since our first issue on Property appeared in the Winter, 2010, we have witnessed the exacerbation of the latest global economic crisis, increasing demands for a programme of global austerity to 'save capitalism', and the confrontations that arise from these intolerable conditions. Within the autohysteria of the crisis, architecture and landscape have been called on to manifest a new iconography for a collapsing civil society. Scapegoat responds: in the service of *what future* will our designs take form?

In the middle of the sixteenth century, Étienne de La Boëtie wrote "The Discourse of Voluntary Servitude" to question that peculiar human trait of desiring one's own repression.[1] In his recent commentary on servility and its new life through consensus, theorist Sylvère Lotringer has remarked that we have departed from the submission to sovereign power that so irritated La Boëtie to arrive at a condition of hegemonic 'involuntary consensus.'[2] Everywhere, the same refrain: there is no other option; the same refrain everywhere: the global economy must be saved *at any cost*. But, as the influence of the carbon democracies of the twentieth century wanes and the massive revolts in North Africa and the Middle East intensify, the shackles of the 'involuntary consensus' machine are breaking apart.[3] From architecture and landscape, perhaps it is time for a complementary reprisal.

The professions of architecture and landscape architecture are founded on notions of *service*. While service contracts formalize and mediate designer-client-builder relations, designers are expected to serve a largely undefined public good. Recently, design culture has proliferated in the transition from industrial production to service industries by providing a single point of service predicated on less visible forms of production, materials, and labour. Architecture and landscape architecture are among the celebrated creative industries that often inhabit obsolete spaces of industry while renovating them to suit a city 're-valued' by their very presence. At the same time, the neoliberal agenda has meant the wholesale disinvestment of public services, including the universal assault on organized labour, the privatization of utilities, the attacks on healthcare around the world and reproductive health services in the U.S. in particular.

The contemporary turn towards the concept of service in the design fields is, at least in part, an attempt to address economic inequality expedited by neoliberal policies. This turn underscores the disproportionate degree to which design has served a global elite and attempts to invert these relations by providing design services to populations typically excluded from design attention, often called the *underserved*. These practices are supported through *pro-bono* contributions by design firms, service-education programs in architecture schools, and government or not-for-profit agencies. Scapegoat is drawn to these practices, but we are also provoked to examine their effects when they simply manage the symptoms of global capitalism. By fulfilling tasks formerly done by the state, architecture enacts a form of volunteerism that plays into neoliberal values and strategies. By reproducing conventional contractual relationships, the cult of the expert is defended, and the knowledge of users is patronized. By reducing design to a technical tool for public good—creative autonomy and critical content disappear. By problem solving without confronting the origins or terms of the problem itself—design becomes the apologist. By adopting a paternalistic position of charity or personal heroics—design is compromised by "the indignity of speaking for others."[4]

In response, Scapegoat looks to current practices to intensify our concept of service *as a problem*: How can we develop new models for self-management and mutual aid that move beyond unidirectional forms of service as clientelism and dependency? How can we think through service provision beyond the state? How can we privilege voluntary association and ethical reciprocity rather than volunteerism? How can new approaches to training and the intergenerational transmission of knowledge be radically re-organized? How has the rise of the populist Right coincided with mechanisms of gentrification and the ideologies of the so-called 'creative city?' How can we counter the predominance of economic metaphors in our attempts to articulate values and commitments? How could design services work in solidarity with the labour of extraction, construction, and maintenance?

These questions resonate inside and against the new political economy of global austerity and Canada's own Harper Doctrine. Scapegoat strives to contest the production and reproduction of this current social order in terms of both the political power and economic accumulation that create its inexorable crises.[5] Building this confrontation through practice requires that we depart from both apolitical opportunism and self-obsessed criticality and turn instead to a reappraisal of the very terms of social reproduction and the place of design within the social. This is not only a question of social support structures, but also how architecture and landscape can facilitate social organization.

With our second issue, Scapegoat argues that design can no longer hide behind an anodyne image of service. Architecture and landscape might find a renewed voice, purpose, and practice among the defectors and rebels who refuse both voluntary submission and involuntary consensus. This would mean challenging contemporary demands for our austere and compliant service, and continuing our practices of struggle in a productive and resolute *denial of service* to both state and capital.

Notes

1. Étienne de La Boëtie, *The Politics of Obedience: The Discourse of Voluntary Servitude*, trans. by Harry Kurz, intro. by Murray Rothbard (New York; Black Rose Books, 1997).

2. Sylvère Lotringer, Introduction to Jean Baudrillard, *The Agony of Power*, trans. Ames Hodges, (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), Intervention Series, 2010).

3. For a prescient analysis of political economy in the carboniferous century, see Timothy Mitchell, "Carbon democracy," *Economy and Society* Vol. 38, No. 3 (August 2009), 399-432.

4. Gilles Deleuze and Michel Foucault, "Intellectuals and Power," in Gilles Deleuze, *Desert Islands and Other Texts* (1953-1974), trans. Mike Taormina (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2003), 207-213.

5. Jonathan Nitzan and Shimshon Bichler, "Capital accumulation: Breaking the dualism of 'economics' and 'politics'," in *Global Political Economy: Contemporary Theories*, edited by Ronen Palan (London: Routledge, 2000), 67-88.